

LOUDOUN COUNTY POVERTY SYMPOSIUM
"CUTTING POVERTY IN HALF"
OCTOBER 24, 2007

CUTTING POVERTY IN HALF



Report of the

Loudoun County Poverty Symposium

October 24, 2007

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Background

The re-emergence of Poverty as a national issue happened as a result of Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath. The pictures of poor people standing knee to neck deep in water, on the roofs of their homes, stranded at the Coliseum, left with nothing made an enormous impression on the American public. The federal government's failure to adequately address this disaster immediately afterwards and its failure, after two years, to really make a dent in the problems in New Orleans has further exacerbated an already bad situation that was hidden until Katrina.

In response, a number of organizations across the country did take notice and determined that the time was right to address the issue of poverty with the goal of cutting it in half by 2017. Some of those organizations include Center for American Progress, Sojourners, "A Call to Renewal", Catholic Charities, Center for Law and Social Policy, The U. S. Conference of Mayors and the Community Action Partnership of which the Loudoun CAP is a member.

As a result of the National Symposium on Poverty and Economic Security held in Bethesda and sponsored by the Community Action Partnership, the Loudoun Community Action Advisory Board decided that since Loudoun ranked either first or second in the race for wealthiest County in the Country, it was time for us to look at the issue of poverty. If anyone could cut poverty in half perhaps we could.

To that end we decided to sponsor a Poverty Simulation on September 12, 2007 and our own Poverty Symposium on October 24.

The Simulation is an experiential event that takes participants through a 'month in the life' of someone living in poverty. The Symposium featured guest speakers from the Center from American Progress, Center for Law and Social Policy and Wider Opportunities for Women plus our own Department of Family Services experts who painted the picture of what life is like for a person in poverty in Loudoun. The Symposium was designed to produce action steps to get started including how those steps can be measured.

We are excited about the opportunity this presents for our community and look forward to full participation from all sectors of our growing population.

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Summary of Speakers Presentations

Robert J. Chirles, Director of the Department of Family Services, began with a summary of what poverty looks like in Loudoun County and the sharp contrast between those who live in poverty and the overall economic picture in Loudoun. Using the theme derived from a bumper sticker seen on Route 7, "Poverty is Owning a Horse". One of the main thrusts of his talk was that the origin of the Federal Poverty threshold originally developed by federal economist Molly O'Shansky in 1963. It remains virtually the same formula (\$20,004 for a family of four) the Federal Government uses today, 44 years later, to determine if a family is eligible for services such as Food Stamps, Day Care, Medical Assistance and other important programs that are intended to help those in poverty remain self-sufficient. He went on to describe the many people in Loudoun County, particularly the working poor, who earn too much to qualify for federal assistance but not enough to be self-sufficient and cannot make use of those services. He referred to the many assets of the Loudoun community in contrast to the increasing demand for the services of non-profit and government agencies that serve the lower income community.

Peter Edelman, Professor of Law at Georgetown University Law Center where he teaches constitutional law and poverty law, was the first guest speaker. He spoke about the cost of keeping people in poverty vs. paying to bring them out of poverty and cited a number of the recommendations found in the Executive Summary of "From Poverty to Prosperity: A National Strategy to Cut Poverty in Half", the Report of the Center for American Progress Task Force on Poverty, of which he was a co-chairman. The report suggests, among other things, that the minimum wage be raised and indexed to half the average hourly wage, that the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit be expanded and that child care be guaranteed and early education be promoted for all.

Professor Edelman pointed out that "persistent childhood poverty is estimated to cost our nation \$500 billion each year...about 4% of the nation's Gross Domestic Product."¹

The combined cost of all of the recommendations of the Center for American Progress is \$90 billion a year, a large number, but less than 25% of what the U.S. is spending to maintain people in poverty.

The second speaker of the morning was Camille Cormier of Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW). Ms. Cormier introduced the group to the Self-Sufficiency Standard, a formula developed by WOW to determine the income necessary for a family to be self-sufficient in a given community. The Standard uses net

¹ "From Poverty to Prosperity": A National Strategy to Cut Poverty in Half, Report and Recommendations of the Center for American Progress Task Force on Poverty, Executive Summary, April, 2007, pg.1.

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income and factors in both the cost of taxes and any refunds from the EITC and calculates income without subsidies from Food Stamps, Medicaid, subsidized child care and other benefits.

She also discussed the impact of "work subsidies" that bring a family's income within range of the self-sufficiency income in a locality.

The final speaker of the morning session was Jodie Levin Epstein, Assistant Director of the Center for Law and Social Policy. She spoke to the group about what other localities are doing to cut poverty in half. She talked about what happened in the United Kingdom when Prime Minister Tony Blair along with his colleagues in government took on this challenge. They decided to cut poverty by 25% over a specified time period. The result was that they cut poverty by 20%. When someone pointed out that they had failed to meet their goal and that was a failure, Prime Minister Blair disagreed. He said that 20% was far better than where they had started.

Levin Epstein went on to talk about other localities in the United States that were setting specific goals and working towards meeting them. She urged Loudoun County citizens to push their governing body to make the goal of cutting poverty in half an official project. She said that if we did we would be the first county in the United States to do so.

All of the material referred to and distributed to the participants is included in Appendix II at the end of this document.

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Report of the Small Group Sessions

Access to Adequate Health care including Oral health, Mental health and Disability Issues - Resource People: Debra Dever, Judy Hines

Question 1: *How Does this Issue affect those living in poverty in Loudoun County?*

It affects their ability to remain employed, leading to other family issues and the ability of family members to sustain themselves and be self-sufficient.

Poor or limited access to health care = increase cost.

Research has indicated Primary medical care and prevention efforts can prevent complications and untoward outcomes of problems diagnosed early and treated. Some diseases and problems can be prevented all together. For example, management of hypertension can prevent strokes.

Access to adequate health can prevent disability which is a high cost to the community.

Untreated medical and mental health problems and put the community at risk, i.e. the spread of infectious diseases.

Question 2: *What goals can be set in this Issue area that leads to self-sufficiency for those living in poverty in Loudoun County? Create one goal statement.*

By the year 2020, 100% of the residents of Loudoun County will have access to adequate health care, to include medical, dental and mental health/substance abuse Services.

Question 3: *How can the Goal Statement for each Issue Area be put into action. List two action steps or project statements.*

1. Work with the business community to expand insurance coverage or provide a system to allow access to health care to small business employees
2. Develop a County-wide resource guide to health care services available to County residents to include eligibility criteria

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Question 4: *How can the success of the action step or project be measured? List 3-5 measurements for each step.*

1. The percentage of people who have health insurance or belong to a program providing at a minimum basic primary medical care has increased
2. Number of visits to the Emergency Room for a non-emergency care has decreased
3. Residents of Loudoun County can identify a primary care provider
4. Marketing campaign to make people aware of their options and available resources and how to access them is completed and done on an ongoing basis. A directory of available resources is made available to everyone and kept updated
5. Providers in Loudoun County will track and be able to report how their clients have learned about the service

Resource Person's Comments:

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Access to Educational Opportunity including access to post secondary education - Resource Person: Carol Basham

Question 1: How does this Issue affect those living in poverty in Loudoun County? (List 3-5 ways)

1. There is a difference between the rate of expulsion/suspension between African American children and white children. According to members of the group African American children are 30% more likely to be suspended or expelled than white children.
2. "Super Achiever" is the norm for creating a perception that other students have no need for educational support. This may leave the students non-performing.
3. No Child Left Behind has allowed for students who are not achieving to receive early remediation. Find students that special education does not identify for success and help them to maximize opportunities to succeed
4. Pre-school enrollment is limited and does not support the County's need

Question 2: What goals can be set in the Issue Area that leads to self-sufficiency for those living in poverty in Loudoun County? Create one goal statement for your Issue Area.

Goal Statement: Identify and resolve the barriers to equal education opportunities that exist in the current school system:

1. Increase Pre-school opportunities (Head Start, STE, ECSE)
2. Identify and provide vocational services to special needs students by Middle School
3. Ensure "leveling the playing field" for ethnic students

Question 3: How can the Goal Statement for each Issue Area be put into action? List two action steps or project statements.

Pre-School: (A) Raise the income level for early childhood education program to meet the self-sufficiency standard for Loudoun County. (B) Find the funds to support additional pre-school programs (political organizations, community awareness, local business, and corporations)

Middle School: (A) Identify students entering Middle School with diagnosed disabilities who could benefit from job training skills to be self-sufficient. (B) Identify the current services and interventions that are required.

Level the Playing Field: (A) Train teacher to be culturally competent. (B) Increase the teacher level of expectation for all students and leave no child behind.

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Question 4: *How can the success of the action step or project be measured? List 3-5 measurements for each step.*

Pre School:

1. Quadruple the enrollment of pre-school students by 2012
2. Compare current funding (now) to the 2012 funding level. Community awareness is measured by increase enrollment.
3. Increase number of volunteers in schools tutoring/mentoring programs

Middle School:

1. Number of students participating in jobs skills programs
2. Number of additional programs
3. Number of marketable skills

Level the Playing Field:

1. Minority student achievement gap eliminated
2. Minority suspensions on a par with non-minority students
3. Graduation rates on a par with non-minority students
4. Correct disproportional rate of minorities @ the JDC by 2012

Resource Person's Comments:

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Employment and Economic Issues, i.e., wages, benefits, international trade, globalization - Resource Person: Andy Johnston

Question 1: How does this Issue affect those living in poverty in Loudoun County? (List 3-5 ways)

1. Having a career path is important. Just having a job becomes the be all/end all. Need to steer towards an employment track. Educate towards the various tracks.
2. Women who are not poor can be helped out of financial straits, but the ones who end up in the shelter are very difficult to help out of poverty. Many of the County's employers do not pay benefits. This practice keeps people in poverty.
3. Average amount for the monthly wage of a family on welfare is \$1,370. Increase their salaries to poverty level
4. Women who break out of the cycle have been worked with for 5 to 9 years with lots of support including financial supports
5. High cost of living combined with low wages make it more intransient
6. Need career assistance to clarify and avoid confusion about career decisions/career indecisiveness that keeps them in dead end jobs
7. Child care costs taking ever increasing amount of disposable income
8. Ancillary supports giving them other financial support through the non-profits
9. Lower wages in an economically booming community are not keeping up with the economic boom
10. Immigrants frequently willing to work for low wages which deflates wages

Question 2: What goals can be set in this Issue Area that leads to self-sufficiency for those living in poverty in Loudoun County? Create one goal statement for you Issue Area.

Goal Statement: To increase career awareness education; promote a livable wage; and provide ancillary supportive services that alleviates poverty in 10 years.

Question 3: How can the Goal Statement for each Issue Area be put into action? List two actions steps or project statements.

1. Take Poverty Simulation to the Chamber of Commerce. Promote/Praise/Recognize businesses that pay a livable wage and provide adequate benefits.
2. Savannah Model – sell business community on economic value of decreasing poverty and promote the self-sufficiency wage
3. Give people more tools to increase their wages

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4. Provide residents with educational and career tools that will help them succeed and earn self-sufficiency wages as well as provide businesses with the employees that enable them to meet this economic goal

Question 4: *How can the success of the action step or project be measured? (List 3-5 ways)*

1. How many businesses adopted the self-sufficiency wage? How many referrals coming from business for training that improves skills.
2. Completed career counseling training. NoVA graduation rates, NoVA enrollment rates, DFS/Nonprofits that area providing that training.
3. Number of businesses that adopt a living wage. Number of residents completing career education opportunities.

Resource Person's Comments:

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Environmental and Energy Issues - Resource Person: Keith Nusbaum

Question 1: *How does this issue affect those living in poverty in Loudoun County?*

1. Lack of public, affordable public transportation; people with cars are affected by high cost of gasoline
2. Inability to heat and cool homes because of high cost of energy; Domino Affect – inability to keep homes heated means lack of hot water – bathe children with cold water – children get sick – go to school dirty – parents can't cook food so children go hungry or don't eat healthy, nutritious food.
3. People living in poverty tend to live on the worst available land, living near steep slopes, near flood planes, near landfills, without adequate plumbing/septic
4. The choice of fuel for people living in poverty can be limited to the most expensive and the most dangerous

Question 2: *What goal can be set in this Issue Area that leads to self-sufficiency for those living in poverty in Loudoun County? Create on goal statement for your Issue Area.*

Goal Statement: To increase environmental and energy efficiency, awareness and education.

Question 3: *How can the Goal Statement for each Issue Area be put into action? List two actions steps or project statements.*

1. Initiate a countywide public information campaign dedicated to the goal of energy and resource conservation
2. Create a dedicated full-time employee within the Department of Family Services who would provide environmental and energy assessments and education to those living in poverty (and the community as a whole) as well as coordinate work efforts between non-profits, business partners and other government agencies.

Question 4: *How can the success of the action step or project be measured? List 3-5 measurements for each step.*

1. The new FTE responsible for education and awareness can report statistics and measure progress from the individuals and families living in poverty
2. The new FTE can present data from non-profits and other agencies related to their environmental and energy efforts to assist those living in poverty

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3. Expand the bike trail to assist with transportation access, therefore reduce environmental and energy costs (clarify this one).

Resource Person's Comments:

I think that the scope of the Environmental and energy issues is too broad. Best to split them. That way there can be a greater attention paid to the energy issue which of the two, is far more important on a day-to-day basis. Simply put, "poor people have poor energy choices." This can be explored in much greater detail.

Environmental issues are important too but the "fix" for these issues is far harder to achieve than say, getting storm windows subsidized.

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Food and Nutrition - Resource Person: Martha Calihan, M.D.

Question 1: *How does this Issue affect those living in poverty in Loudoun County? (List 3-5 ways)*

1. Affects the quality of life for people living in poverty
2. Affects productivity in school and at work
3. Affects development, both physical and cognitive during the first two years of life
4. Affects the rate of obesity among those living in poverty

Question 2: *What goal can be set in this Issue Area that leads to self-sufficiency for those living in poverty in Loudoun County? Create one goal statement for your Issue Area.*

Goal Statement: Loudoun County will improve education on accurate nutritional information and facilitate access to nutritional food.

Question 3: *How can the Goal Statement for each Issue Area be put into action? List two action steps or project statements.*

1. Implement a network that would coordinate supply and demand of nutritional food
2. Implement a nutrition education program for targeted populations in schools, adult education centers, grocery stores and senior centers. When food is received from an agency, individuals must attend nutrition seminar. Offer workshops on nutritional cooking.
3. Use resource funds to allow people to shop at Farmer's Markets

Question 4: *How can the success of the action step or project be measured? List 3-5 measurements for each step.*

1. Is the network created? How many people involved? How many donations received? How many people have accessed the network; measure the number served.
2. Has the program been created? How many people access the program? How many people served?
3. Count the use by individuals

Resource Person's Comments:

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Housing and Economic Development including Homelessness Issues -
Resource Person: Sarah Coyle Etro

Question 1: How does this Issue affect those living in poverty in Loudoun County? (List 3-5 ways)

1. Cannot afford housing
2. Housing costs too high a percent of income
3. Affects access to health care because they have no money left
4. Many people pay more than 30% of income toward housing
5. Lack of stable housing affects person's ability to maintain employment
6. Landlord perspective – people don't seek help quick enough when they have financial crisis
7. Lack of education on finance and household budgeting – learn to live within your means – people living outside of their means
8. Well paying jobs and transportation are related issues
9. Once you've lost your housing due to bad credit, it's hard to get back into housing
10. There is no supply of housing for the very low income
11. There is a stigma associated with homelessness that sticks with you – it's hard to shake
12. As your income gets lower or falls at lowest end, there are fewer affordable housing options in Loudoun

Question 2: What goal can be set in this Issue Area that leads to self-sufficiency for those living in poverty in Loudoun County? Create one goal statement for your Issue Area.

Goal Statement: Use realistic self-sufficiency standard to guide development of housing options, consumer education and use of resources at Federal State and Local level.

- Contrast between Federal poverty level and what it would take to afford to live in Loudoun County;
- People on disability income – Social Security
- Public/Private partnership to educate
- Consumer education, budgeting, representative payees
- Look at resources that we have
- More economically effective to keep people in housing
- Develop resources to support people in the community
- Question use of Federal Poverty Level in regard to local housing programs, where our incomes and housing costs are different

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Question 3: *How can the Goal Statement for each Issue Area be put into Action? List two action steps or project statements.*

1. Expand Point in Time count to capture homeless numbers throughout the County
2. Develop ongoing community outreach program to educate people who are at risk of becoming homeless about community resources
3. Political advocacy related to development of housing policies and use of local resources

Question 4: *How can the success of the action step or project be measured? List 3-5 measurements for each step.*

1. Look at number of persons who were helped to get into housing and look at numbers of persons who remained in stable housing
2. Point in Time Count of homeless – compare numbers from one year to the next to see if there is a decrease in the homeless numbers
3. Compare the costs of preventing someone from becoming homeless vs. all of the economic costs associated with sheltering someone who has become homeless

Resource Person's Comments:

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Political Advocacy - Resource Person: Mindy Williams

Question 1: *How does this Issue affect those living in poverty in Loudoun County? (List 3-5 ways)*

1. Educating the public, policy makers
2. Affect changes
3. Speak for people who can't speak for themselves
4. Organize – provide means to mobilize

Question 2: *What goal can be set in this Issue Area that leads to self-sufficiency for those living in poverty in Loudoun County? Create one goal statement for your Issue Area.*

Goal Statement: To cut poverty in half (in Loudoun County) by 2017

Or

Organize multiple voices, LHSN, Continuum of Care to educate community and other stakeholders on what poverty is in Loudoun County

Question 3: *How can the Goal Statement for each Issue Area be put into action? List two action steps or project statements.*

1. Identify key members of the coalition (already existing and new).
2. Identify shared priorities
3. Create the strategy to engage
4. Engage!

Question 4: *How can the success of the action step or project be measured? List 3-5 measurements for each step.*

1. Coalition organized
2. Priorities with deadlines established
3. Advocacy plan established
4. Implementation of a strategy

Resource Person's Comments:

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Social and Cultural Integration - Resource Person: Ellen Grunewald

Four Ways People (assimilate) acculturate:

1. Observe – see therefore you do
2. Read – understand, put into action
3. Instructed – try something
4. Forced – to do

Question 1: *How does this Issue affect those living in poverty in Loudoun County? (List 3-5 ways)*

1. Culturally isolated into subcultures
2. Schools teach norms – kids don't bring home – parents don't learn
3. Illiterate in home and host country
4. Self-Esteem issues, coping with loss of high positions in home country
5. Fear of assimilation, afraid they will lose culture
6. People under or over estimate benefits, help community offers
7. Cultural perspectives on poverty

Question 2: *What goal can be set in this Issue Area that leads to self-sufficiency for those living in poverty in Loudoun County? Create one goal statement for your Issue Area.*

Goal Statement: Cultivate leaders in cultural communities to assist with moving toward self-sufficiency.

Question 3: *How can the Goal Statement for each Issue Area be put into action? List two action steps or projects statements.*

Integration: Ability to fully participate in the Community
Assimilation – To identify with the Culture

1. Educate cultural communities about cultural mores and social norms through target venues (Churches, neighborhoods) agencies that work with multicultural clients, mentoring programs, neighborhood programs
2. Develop partnerships with employers to provide vocational English Language classes. Provide incentives to businesses

Question 4: *How can the success of the action step or project be measured? List 3-5 measurements for each step.*

1. Education project - Interview and follow-up with individuals to see what they have learned, if perspectives have changed

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2. ESL Classes in the Workforce –

- Baseline information/assessment
- Number of participants
- Graduation rate – testing
- Continued reassessment – income level consistent with employment

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Summary of Goal Statements

1. By the year 2020, 100% of the residents of Loudoun County will have access to adequate health care
2. Identify and resolve the barriers to equal educational opportunities that exist in the current school system:
 - a. Increase Pre-school opportunities (Head Start, STE, ECSE).
 - b. Identify and provide vocational services to special needs students by Middle School
 - c. Ensure "leveling of the playing field" for ethnic students.
3. Increase career awareness education; promote a livable wage; and provide ancillary supportive services that alleviate poverty in 10 years
4. Increase environmental and energy efficiency, awareness and education
5. Loudoun County will improve education on accurate nutritional information and facilitate access to nutritional food
6. Use realistic self-sufficiency standard to guide development of housing options, consumer education and use of resources at Federal, State and Local level
7. Cut poverty in half (in Loudoun County) by 2017.
Organize multiple voices, LHSN, Continuum of Care to educate community and other stakeholders on what poverty is in Loudoun County.
8. Cultivate leaders in cultural communities to assist with moving toward self-sufficiency

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Summary of Action Steps or Projects

Access to Adequate Health care including Oral health, Mental health and Disability Issues

3. Work with the business community to expand insurance coverage or provide a system to allow access to health care to small business employees
4. Develop a County-wide resource guide to health care services available to County residents to include eligibility criteria

Access to Educational Opportunity including access to post secondary education

1. Pre-School: (A) Raise the income level for early childhood education program to meet the self-sufficiency standard for Loudoun County. (B) Find the funds to support additional pre-school programs (political organizations, community awareness, local business, and corporations)
2. Middle School: (A) Identify students entering Middle School with diagnosed disabilities who could benefit from job training skills to be self-sufficient. (B) Identify the current services and interventions that are required.
3. Level the Playing Field: (A) Train teacher to be culturally competent. (B) Increase the teacher level of expectation for all students and leave no child behind.

Employment and Economic Issues, i.e., wages, benefits, international trade, globalization

1. Take Poverty Simulation to the Chamber of Commerce
2. Promote/Praise/Recognize businesses that pay a livable wage and provide adequate benefits
3. Savannah Model – sell business community on economic value of decreasing poverty and promote the livable wage
4. Give people more tools to increase their wages
5. Provide residents with educational and career tools that will help them succeed and earn livable wages as well as provide businesses with the employees that enable them to meet this economic goal

Environmental and Energy Issues

1. Initiate a countywide public information campaign dedicated to the goal of energy and resource conservation

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2. Create a dedicated full-time employee within the Department of Family Services who would provide environmental and energy assessments and education to those living in poverty (and the community as a whole) as well as coordinate work efforts between non-profits, business partners and other government agencies

Food and Nutrition

1. Implement a network that would coordinate supply and demand of nutritional food
2. Implement a nutrition education program for targeted populations in schools, adult education centers, grocery stores and senior centers. When food is received from an agency, individuals must attend nutrition seminar. Offer workshops on nutritional cooking.
3. Use resource funds to allow people to shop at Farmer's Markets

Housing and Economic Development including Homelessness

1. Expand Point in Time count to capture homeless numbers throughout the County
2. Develop ongoing community outreach program to educate people who are at risk of becoming homeless about community resources
3. Political advocacy related to development of housing policies and use of local resources

Political Advocacy

1. Identify key members of the coalition (already existing and new).
2. Identify shared priorities
3. Create the strategy to engage
4. Engage!

Social and Cultural Integration

Integration: Ability to fully participate in the Community
Assimilation – To identify with the Culture

1. Educate cultural communities about cultural mores and social norms through target venues (Churches, neighborhoods) agencies that work with multicultural clients, mentoring programs, neighborhood programs
2. Develop partnerships with employers to provide vocational English Language classes. Provide incentives to businesses

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Conclusion

It is the intent of the Community Action Advisory Board and the other sponsors to continue the work of the Symposium by acting on the Goal Statements and the Action Steps/Projects identified by the Small Groups with additional advice from the Resource Persons and other participants. It is the view of the Sponsoring Group that cutting poverty in half in ten years in Loudoun County is a "doable" goal. Through collaboration with human service professionals, public officials and others, this goal can be attained by 2017.